

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 094 502

EC 062 446

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TITLE Massachusetts Special Olympics Poly Hockey.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Exceptional Child Education; *Games; Mentally Handicapped; *Physical Education; Physical Fitness; *Teaching Guides
IDENTIFIERS Massachusetts Special Olympics Association; MSOA; *Poly Hockey

ABSTRACT

Poly Hockey is featured in this manual of instructions for coaches and teachers to use with mentally retarded boys and girls of all ages and ability levels. It is noted that the sport has been supported by the Board of Directors of the Special Olympics and has been used in Massachusetts for over 7 years. Explained is use of the game indoors, and with polyethylene plastic hockey sticks and pucks. Described are equipment, playing area, the team, the game, play, scoring, goaltending, rules and infractions such as high sticking, players' roles, and techniques and drills such as stick handling and passing. (Author/MC)

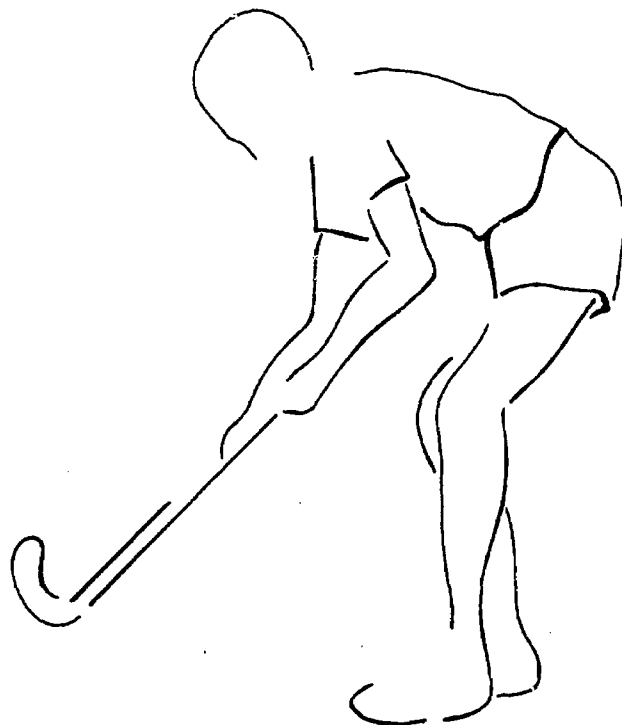
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MASSACHUSETTS



SPECIAL OLYMPICS

POLY HOCKEY

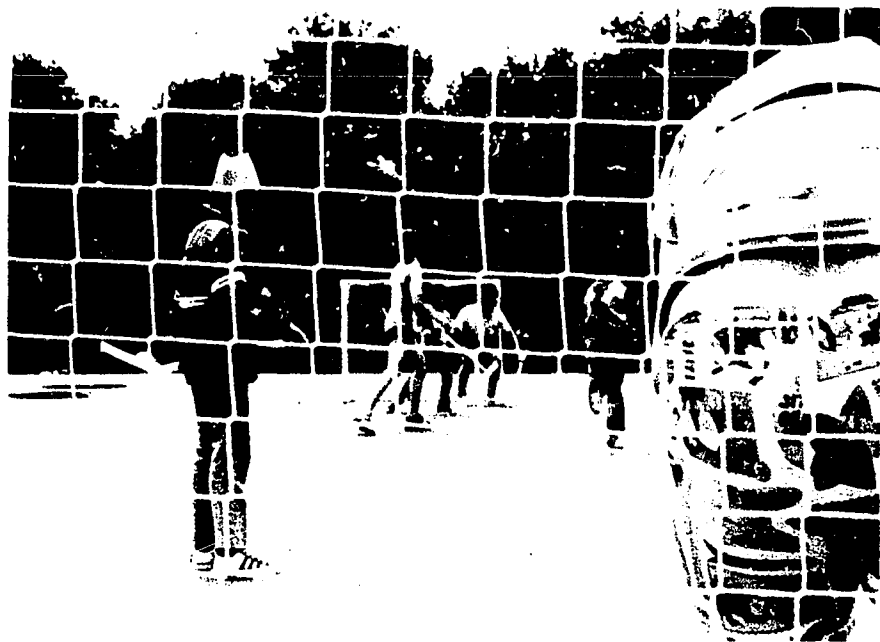
BY JIM MORRISSEY

A SPECIAL THANKS TO COSOM CORPORATION FOR
MAKING THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOKLET
POSSIBLE, AND FOR PROVIDING MASSACHUSETTS
SPECIAL OLYMPICS WITH A GENEROUS SUPPLY
OF EQUIPMENT FOR CLINICS AND TOURNAMENTS.

THANKS TO NANCY CURRAN FOR COVER DESIGN
AND LAYOUT ASSISTANCE.

THANKS ALSO TO MARC EMOND FOR HIS FINE
PHOTOGRAPHIC WORK.

FOR HIS ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT THROUGH-
OUT THIS PROGRAM, A SPECIAL THANKS TO
RON ARIETA, STATE DIRECTOR, MASSACHUSETTS
SPECIAL OLYMPICS.



POLY HOCKEY AND MASSACHUSETTS SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Early in 1972 the Mass. Special Olympics Board of Directors gave their full support to Poly Hockey as an official team activity in Massachusetts.

Poly Hockey had been played in the state for over seven years by mentally retarded boys and girls of all ages and ability levels, and had proven to be a safe and very popular activity. It is one of the very few team activities of which this can be said.

Poly Hockey is a relatively simple game, with easily learned rules, and requires little initial skill to insure successful participation with the very first try. In fact many retarded boys and girls who have often shied away from competitive team games are some of the most enthusiastic participants.

Coaches and teachers who have presented Poly Hockey to their children are not only delighted with the safety aspect of the equipment, but are also quite pleased with the vigorous exercise inherent in the activity, as well as the contribution it makes in helping to develop alertness, motor coordination, and a healthy competitive spirit.

After having their classes play the game a few times, many coaches and teachers were surprised at who the outstanding players turned out to be. Because Poly Hockey is not a contact sport, and successful play often depends upon determination and enthusiasm, many coaches and teachers were delighted to find that their better players were often the ones who were not outstanding in other team activities.

In March of 1973, Massachusetts Special Olympics Association, Inc. held the first State Poly Hockey tournament. Over one hundred youngsters participated in the finals with enthusiasm and spirit that would be hard to exceed.

Competition was offered for both boys and girls, with two divisions each.

At the 1973 Mass. Special Olympics State Games, Ken Hodge, All Star NHL hockey player for the Boston Bruins conducted a Poly Hockey clinic and was very enthusiastic about the equipment and the game. "This is really a great activity for retarded kids, and the equipment is the safest I've seen yet", Hodge commented.

MASS. SPECIAL OLYMPICS RULES

The following rules are those used for tournament play in Massachusetts. The number of players can successfully be changed to accommodate a larger or smaller number of players in a physical education or recreation class. Poly Hockey can also be played outdoors using a "wiffle" ball in place of a puck.

EQUIPMENT

Polyethylene plastic hockey sticks and pucks, and two six feet wide by four feet high goals make up

the only equipment needed. This equipment is manufactured by Cosom Corporation of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The sticks are made up of a flexible, hollow shaft with a flexible blade. The pucks are regulation hockey size, but are also hollow polyethylene plastic.

PLAYING AREA

Any large area, indoors or out, may be used, but a gymnasium laid out for basketball is recommended. The mid-court basketball line is the center line. Goals should be at least eight to ten feet away from the wall to allow behind the net play. An area in front of the goal eight to ten feet wide by four to five feet deep should be marked off as a crease. Only the goalie is allowed inside the crease regardless of the position of the puck.



KEN HODGE AT M.S.O.A. STATE MEET

THE TEAM

Each team consists of seven players with reserves unlimited. Each team will have: one goaltender, two defensemen, two centers, and two forwards.

To avoid congestion and to promote positional play, the forwards and defensemen will be limited to their half of the floor and will not be allowed to step on the center line. They may play a puck that is not on their side of the floor, but may not step on or cross the center line. The centers may go any place on the playing area with the exception of the crease. The goalie may leave his crease, but may not cross the center line.

THE GAME

Three periods shall make up the game. Each period consists of twelve minutes running time, or eight minutes when a clock is used.

When a clock is used, it will be stopped at each whistle, and will not re-start until the puck is put into play. If a game is tied at the end of the regulation time, an overtime period of five minutes will be played. A game still tied at the end of overtime will be decided by a five minute sudden

death period, with the first goal scored determining the winner. There will be a four minute rest period between all periods. A team may not call a time out.

PLAY

Play will be started at the start of each period, after each goal, and when the puck is ruled out of play, by dropping the puck between two opposing centers. When the puck has been ruled out of play it should be dropped at the face off area noted on the diagram.

Substitution may be made only when the puck has been whistled dead.

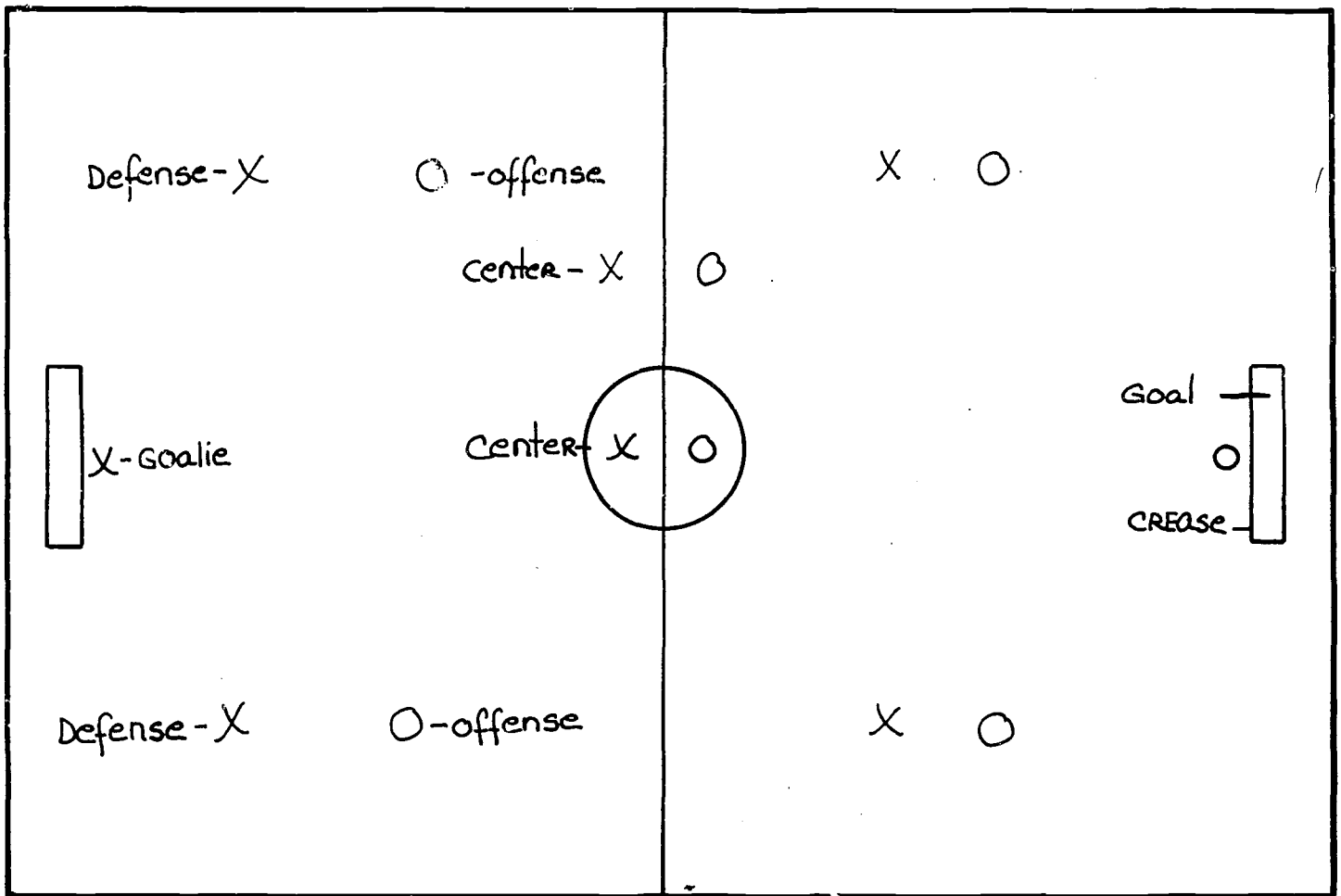
SCORING

A goal shall be scored when the puck passes completely over the goal line as a result of being hit or deflected by a player's stick or body. A puck judged to have been kicked in intentionally by an offensive player shall not count as a goal. A goal counts as one point. A goal will not be scored if an offensive player is in the crease.

GOALTENDING

The goaltender is the only player who may handle the puck. When a goaltender has picked up the puck no other player may attempt to play the puck. The goaltender may hold the puck for no longer than three seconds, and then must throw the puck to the side of or

Floor Plan and Positions



behind the net. A puck held for longer than three seconds must be blown dead and faced off at the face off circle nearest the goalie.

PENALTIES

As in ice hockey, certain infractions of the rules shall result in the offending player sitting out for two minutes.

PENALIZED PLAYERS

If a team with an advantage of one man scores a goal, the penalized player may return at once. If a team scoring has a two player advantage, one player (the first penalized) may return. No more than two players from one team may be sitting out the the same time. Further penalties will be served as previous penalties expire.

PENALIZED INFRACTIONS

The following infractions of the rules will result in the offending player being penalized for two minutes.

BODY CHECKING

Body checking or intentional body contact is not a part of Poly Hockey. Incidental contact such as two players bumping while playing the puck is inevitable and acceptable if it is clearly unintentional.

HIGH STICKING

Any player swinging his stick above the level of his waist whether intentional or not.

TRIPPING

Any player tripping or attempting to trip another player with his stick or his body.

SLASHING AND HOOKING

Striking or attempting to strike another player with a stick on any part of his body. Hooking with the blade of the stick on any part of another player's body. Hooking a player's stick is permissible.

HANDLING THE PUCK

Any player, except the goalie, who intentionally touches the puck with his hands.

ENTERING THE CREASE

Any player, except the goalie, entering the crease.

OFFSIDE

Any player, except the centers, crossing the center line.

FIGHTING

There is no place in sports for fighting. Fighting is rare in Poly Hockey and must stay that way. Any player fighting must be banished for the

remainder of the game.

OFFICIALS

For tournament play there should be two referees and a scorer. The scorer will keep score, keep the game time, and keep the penalty time. The scorer should have a whistle or horn to signal the referees.

The officials for Poly Hockey should be sensitive people who are familiar with retarded people. Very often they can, because of their proximity to the action, smooth over a potentially upsetting situation.



POSITIONAL PLAY

Instruction and practice in proper positional play makes the game of Poly Hockey a more enjoyable activity for players, coaches,

and spectators alike. Having each player aware of his own position and responsibilities also contributes to his mental alertness and self-esteem. All players should be encouraged to learn each and every position in Poly Hockey.

CENTER

The centers should be the best conditioned athletes on the team. They are the ones who make the game move. Their responsibilities include both offensive and defensive play.

In order to be in position to play both ways, the centers should be encouraged not to go behind either net. A center should be a good stick handler and possess good passing skills. Teamwork between centers is vital to a team's success.

FORWARD

A forward's primary responsibility is to keep pressure on the defending goalie by keeping the puck in his own end. He should be a good passer and be able to play the puck when it goes behind the goal. Teamwork between forwards on pucks behind the goal is important in keeping their puck in the offensive end. Forwards should know where their centers are and be ready to make quick passes. Forwards should also have a good, quick wrist shot

DEFENSEMEN

The responsibility of the defenseman is to keep the puck out of his end and to keep any offensive player from getting an open shot on goal. The defenseman is often called upon to fall quickly in front of a shot in order to keep it from penetrating. He must be careful to keep offensive players from getting between him and the goal. He is also expected to play all pucks behind the goal and must work closely with the other defenseman. Defensemen must practice clearing the puck out to the centers and be especially careful never to pass the puck in front of his own goal from behind the net. They must also be careful not to come too far out of their position when the puck is in the other end.

GOALIE

A goalie must be quick, agile and alert. The goalie must never take his eyes off the puck no matter where it might be on the floor. He should talk to his teammates and keep them informed as to the position of the puck and opposing players. The goalie should play in a crouched position, ready to go to either side with the stick held in one hand in front of his feet. He should be ready to knock down or grab a loose puck or shot with the

other hand. He may pick up the puck and upon doing so, should immediately throw it to his defensemen to the side or toss it behind the net and to the corner. The goalie must be prepared to drop or dive quickly in front of a shot. He may leave the crease, but should be encouraged to stay close to the goal.

Coaches should be sensitive to the feelings of the goalie, as he is the one who is ultimately blamed if a goal is scored. Never change goalies immediately after a goal is scored.

TECHNIQUES AND DRILLS

STICK HANDLING

The stick should be held with one hand at the top and the other eight to ten inches down on the shaft. To discourage high sticking, the stick must not be held like a golf club. When moving the puck the player should be taught to keep the puck in front and to keep it close with alternate taps of the front and back of the blade. A good drill is to form teams and conduct a relay race, stick handling a puck between pins, chairs or teammates in a weaving manner. The players should be taught to keep their stick close to or on the floor at all times.

SHOOTING

Most players will be inclined to take long slap shots at the goal when they are first introduced to Poly Hockey. A simple demonstration will show them that a wrist shot delivered with a flicking motion of the wrists and with little backswing, is the most effective and accurate type of shot, especially in close to the net. Most beginners also have a tendency to shoot the puck at the goalie, making a save quite easy. Players should practice shooting at the corners of the net rather than at the center. Faking before a shot is also a good method of increasing scoring chances. Lining six or eight pucks up on a line fifteen or twenty feet in front of the goal and shooting them in rapid succession is a good drill to improve the quickness of the shot and accuracy.

PASSING

Accurate, alert passing by all members of the team is probably the key to success in Poly Hockey. As in shooting, players should be strongly encouraged to deliver the pass with a flicking or sliding motion with little backswing. This is not only a more accurate method, but it does not telegraph the play the way a high backswing does. A good drill for passing accuracy is

to have two players stand about twenty feet apart, straddling the center line, passing the puck back and forth while trying to keep it on the line.

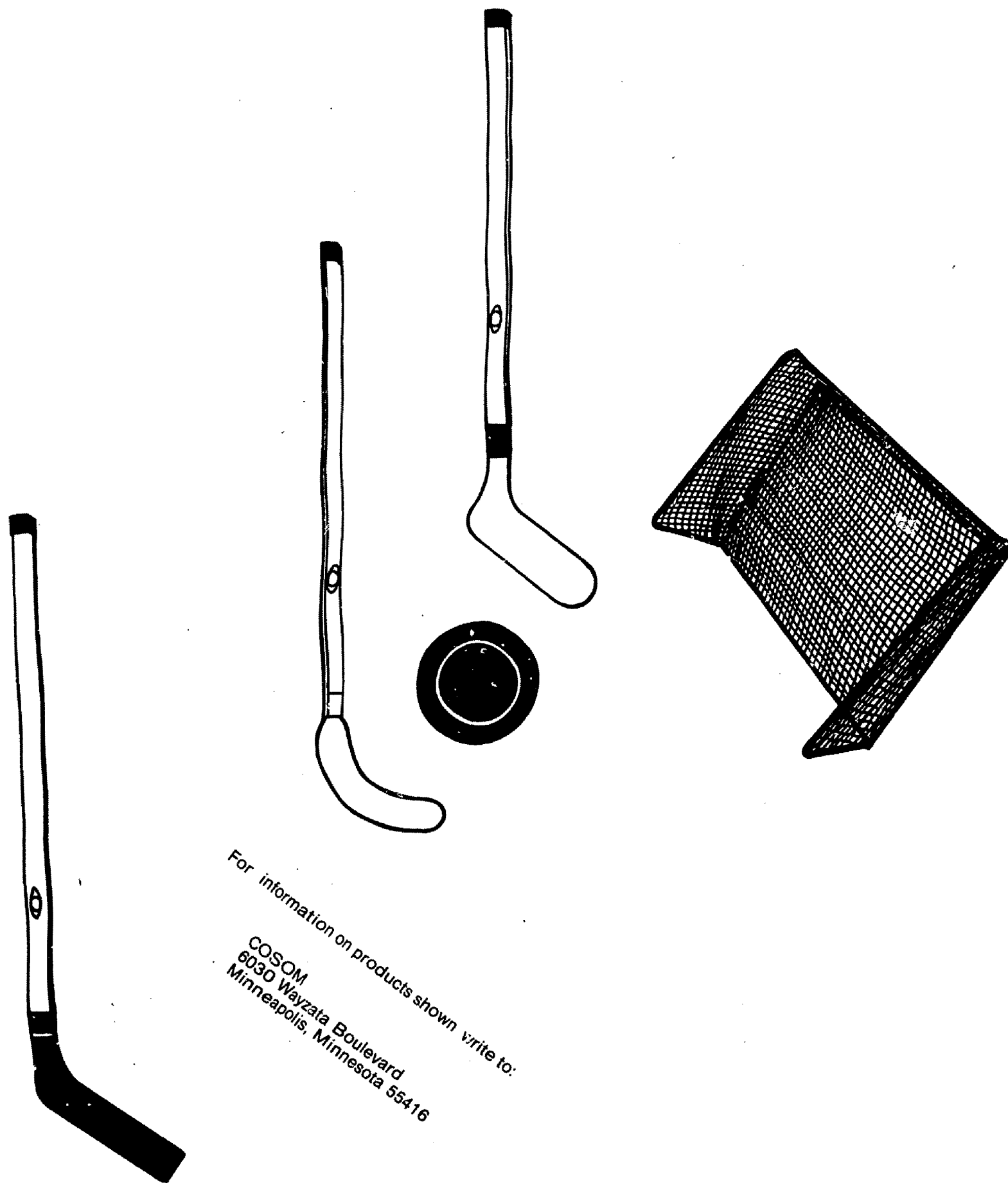
DEFENSIVE PLAY

Every player on a Poly Hockey team is called upon to play defense no matter what his position may be. Each player should be taught to keep his stick and his body between an offensive player and his own goal. A defensive player should be instructed to use his feet to clear the puck when the area is congested and use of the stick is difficult. Sweep checking is the method used to defend against an offensive player trying to move the puck against a defender. It is accomplished simply by staying four to six feet away from the opponent, while quickly sweeping the extended stick back and forth in front of him in an arc.

Note pictures on the inside of the back cover for examples of some of the above described techniques and drills.

Anyone with specific questions on Poly Hockey or needing rule interpretations is invited to address themselves to:

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